

PART V

CROPS

Major Crops

Because of the importance of livestock farming, dairying and poultry raising, a major part of the cropland is used for growing feed crops. Over 77 percent of the cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and grass silage. Most of this feed is used directly on the farms and in the immediate locality to support dairy and beef cattle. In 1954, the 5,495 acres of harvested cropland within Kitsap County were planted to the following crops listed in order of acreage importance: clover and timothy hay, alfalfa and other hay, wild hay, tree fruits and grapes, strawberries and other berries, commercial vegetables, oats and corn.

Crop Trends

The crop history of any farming region reflects to a large degree the economic changes occurring within it. A number of changes are apparent in the emphasis and acreages Kitsap County farmers have given to leading crops. As a

Total Acres of Land Harvested, 1954:
5,495 acres

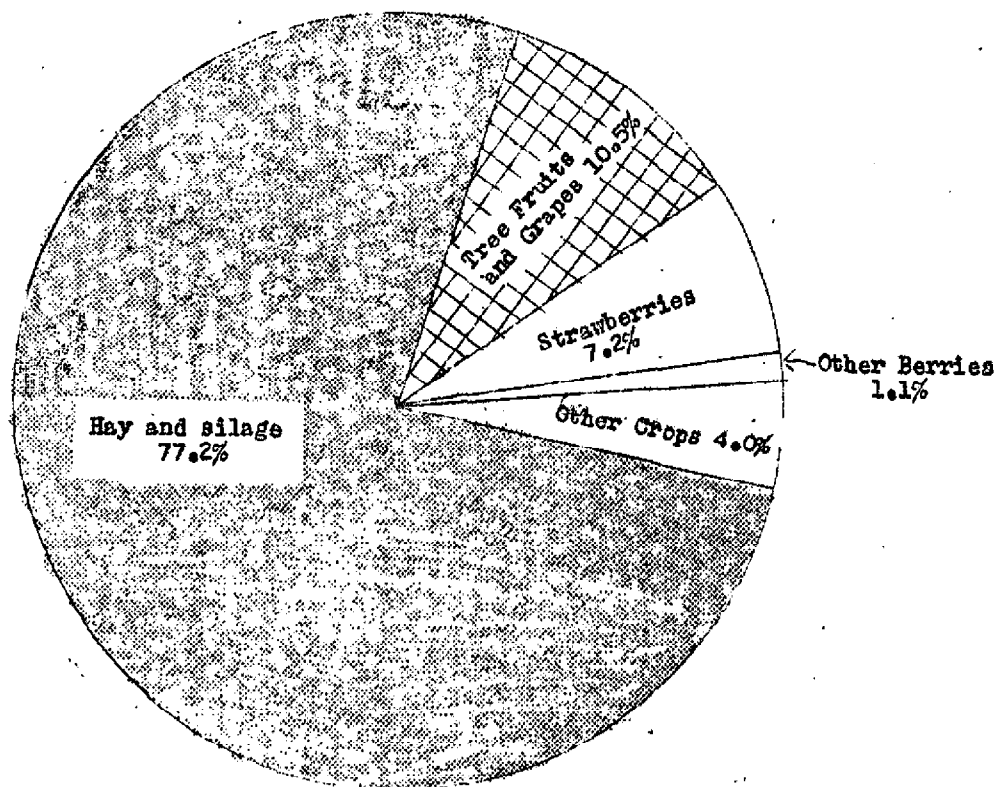


Figure 10.- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops
Kitsap County, 1954.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture, 1954)

result of a rapid population growth in the intermediate area and a changed market outlet, agriculture has changed since 1939 in types and amounts of crops and product produced. Changes in the crop patterns also result from farmers' experimentations with various crops and types of farming for specific markets.

Since 1939 there have been several general trends in the crop program of Kitsap County farmers. The acreage in hay crops has decreased from about 6,552 acres in 1939 to 4,853 in 1954. Much of this reduction of land for the production of hay is due in part to the increase in the use of grass silage as a winter feed for cattle. The acreage in commercial vegetables, tree fruits and grapes, and commercial berries have shown reductions since 1939. All land in crops has decreased since 1939, according to Census data. In 1939 there were 9,475 acres harvested for crops compared with 5,495 in 1954. This indicates a trend in which harvested cropland has been diverted into permanent pasture, woodlots, residential, industrial and federal properties and other uses which do not produce a harvested crop.

Hay and Silage Crops

For many years the most important crop in Kitsap County from the acreage standpoint has been hay. All types of hay and silage have ranged between 4,500 and 6,600 acres. Clover and timothy are the most common hay types, generally

Table 16.- Alfalfa Hay and Clover-Timothy Hay
Acreage, Yield and Production
Kitsap County, 1939-1955.

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	1,450	1.9	2,800	60	2.0	120
1940	1,400	2.4	3,290	70	3.0	210
1941	1,600	1.6	2,900	70	2.0	140
1942	1,700	2.3	3,860	60	2.0	120
1943	1,700	1.8	3,050	60	3.0	180
1944	1,630	1.9	3,050	40	2.0	80
1945	1,700	1.7	2,900	40	2.0	80
1946	1,600	1.8	2,820	40	2.0	80
1947	1,470	1.8	2,620	40	2.8	80
1948	1,570	2.0	3,140	50	2.2	110
1949	1,640	1.4	2,370	60	1.5	90
1950	1,500	1.6	2,400	60	2.9	120
1951	1,600	2.2	3,500	80	3.0	240
1952	1,700	2.7	4,600	100	2.0	200
1953	1,700	2.1	3,550	120	2.0	240
1954	1,670	1.5	2,510	120	2.5	300
1955	1,600	1.4	2,320	140	3.5	490

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Estimates
Division, State of Washington, 1939-1955.

grown in a mixture. Clover and timothy has shown some fluctuation in the number of acres harvested during the last 15 years with a peak of 1,700 acres and a low of 1,400 acres. Wild hay (670) and other hay (790) comprise the next largest portion of hay land. Small grains cut green for hay have been on a downward trend since 1939. Acreage in 1939 of grain hay was at a peak of 2,362 acres compared with only 450 acres in 1954. Silage was harvested from 428 acres in 1954 compared with about 380 acres in 1949.

Silage making is a rapidly growing farm practice to utilize green forage crops more efficiently and to lessen losses in hay quality from damp weather at harvest time. Numerous farms have added silage cutters and installed silage pits and silos in recent years. Nearly all of the hay produced on Kitsap farms is consumed within the county. Only 12 farms were reported to have sold hay in 1954, with most of this hay being sold to neighboring farms. Kitsap farmers also import alfalfa from surplus hay areas in eastern Washington.

Oats, Other Small Grains and Corn

The production of oats and other small grains on a commercial basis in Kitsap County has been limited by several factors. One of these factors is the size of farm. Another is the high intensity of dairy and livestock farms which divert much of the land into permanent pasture hay land. The acreage of oats

Table 17.- Oats and Corn: Acreage, Yield and Production
Kitsap County, 1939-1955

Year	Oats (for grain)			Field Corn		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	60	44.0	2,640	10	24.0	240
1940	50	35.0	1,750	10	26.0	260
1941	40	38.0	1,520	10	29.0	290
1942	30	38.0	1,140	10	18.0	180
1943	20	39.0	780	10	16.0	160
1944	10	23.0	230	10	14.0	140
1945	10	28.0	280	10	32.0	320
1946	10	32.0	320	10	34.0	340
1947	10	36.0	360	--	--	--
1948	20	34.0	680	--	--	--
1949	10	46.0	460	--	--	--
1950	10	38.0	380	--	--	--
1951	10	35.0	350	--	--	--
1952	10	43.0	430	--	--	--
1953	10	38.0	380	--	--	--
1954	20	25.0	500	--	--	--
1955	20	35.0	700	--	--	--

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division
State of Washington

has declined from 62 acres in 1939 to only 15 acres in 1954, with a production of 375 bushels. Two farms reported growing spring wheat in 1954, harvesting 380 bushels of which 292 bushels were sold. Corn was produced on 10 acres in 1954 showing a decline of 17 acres since 1949. Most of the corn was grazed or cut for green or dry fodder. The remainder was cut and used as corn silage.

Vegetables

Kitsap County is not self-sufficient in the production of vegetable crops. Much of this is due to the terrain and the lack of fertile bottom soil needed in the production of commercial vegetables. Also, much of the land suited to vegetables is used for pasture and hay. The production of vegetables has shown a decreasing trend since 1939 and now occupies only 27 acres. The largest share of the truck crop land in recent years has been used for the production of sweet corn and potatoes. Other vegetables grown in smaller quantities included snapbeans, tomatoes, green peas and cabbage. Nearly all of the vegetable crops were sold in local fresh markets with little or no processing being done. Much of the vegetable crops are imported from neighboring Puget Sound counties and from eastern Washington. Over 1,050 Kitsap County farms reported raising vegetables in gardens for home use in 1954.

Berries: Strawberries and Raspberries

Kitsap is the eighth most important berry growing county of Washington. It is also number 33 among America's 100 leading strawberry growing counties. The growing of berries has fluctuated from a low of 340 acres in 1944 to a peak

Table 18.- Berry Crops: Strawberries and Raspberries
Kitsap County, 1940-1955.

Year	Strawberries		Raspberries (Red)	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1940	670	1,475	--	--
1941	750	1,800	--	--
1942	625	1,150	--	--
1943	400	570	--	--
1944	275	210	35 ^{1/}	45 ^{1/}
1945	200	360	40	40
1946	250	330	40	50
1947	400	750	50	75
1948	550	1,200	65	120
1949	650	825	75	85
1950	700	1,400	80	110
1951	800	1,000	75	80
1952	850	1,700	70	75
1953	850	1,700	70	100
1954	450	950	50	125
1955	480	975	50	135
1956	90	50	30	10

^{1/} Not available prior to 1944.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Agric. Estimates
Division, State of Washington

of 724 in 1949. Total production in 1954 was 438 acres. Freeze damage in 1950 and 1955 has resulted in some variations in acreage and type.

Mainly in small fields cultivated by over 100 growers, strawberries are the main cash berry crop. Strawberry acreage reached a peak of 850 acres in 1952-53 and has since gone down to less than 400. Some are sold locally on the fresh market but most of the berries are sold to processors in the immediate urban area of Kitsap, King and Pierce Counties. Bainbridge Island is the major producing area with nearly 225 acres of strawberries. The Poulsbo-Kingston area with 60 acres and the Port Orchard area with 40 acres are other locations of strawberry plantings. Second to strawberries in total acreage are raspberries with 30 acres in 1955. Raspberries have decreased since a peak acreage of 80 acres in 1950. The interest in blueberries as a commercial crop has increased from 9 acres in 1950 to 20 in 1957. Small plots of loganberries, boysenberries, youngberries and blackberries are also grown commercially. Some wild huckleberries are picked and processed at a plant in Bremerton. Nearly all of the berries grown in Kitsap County are processed by the Northwest Berry Packers, Inc., who have plants in Bremerton and Winslow. About 15 percent of the berries are sold on the fresh market.

Tree Fruits, Nuts and Grapes

Kitsap County has a total of 572 acres planted in fruit trees, nuts and grapes. This is a decrease of nearly one-half from the 1,129 acres in 1939. The number of fruit and nut trees of all ages on all Kitsap County farms in 1954 was: apples (7,109), peaches (2,470), pears (1,494), prunes and plums (1,401). Grapes were grown on 128 farms having a total of 1,377 vines. Census enumerations since 1935 indicate a decrease in all fruit trees and since 1950 there has been a 61 percent decrease in the total number of fruit and nut trees. Many orchards have been removed from lands suited for growing more profitable berry and livestock crops. Other orchards have gone into suburban residential property. Freezing weather in 1950 and in 1955 killed numerous fruit trees which have not been replaced. In general, western Washington tree fruits are unable to compete in the market with Yakima County and other eastern Washington orchard areas.

Holly

Kitsap is one of the leading holly producing counties in western Washington. In 1955 holly was harvested from 60 acres located in the Silverdale-Keyport area. The freeze in 1955 reduced production by nearly one-half and many of the damaged trees were replaced by new plantings. There are two major holly growers in the county who cut and package holly for Christmas season marketing in the Seattle-Tacoma area and in the eastern United States.

Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs and Plants

There has been a recent expansion in nursery and greenhouse production. With a larger urban market and an increased rate of local residential construction, the demand for plants and flowering ornamentals has greatly increased. Acreage planted in nursery products nearly tripled and sales from nurseries increased four times since 1939. The greenhouse business has shown a steady trend upward since 1939 as greenhouse space in 1954 nearly doubled that of 1949.

Commercial growing and selling of Croft lily bulbs and flowers has shown a downward trend since its peak in 1950-1954 and now occupy only 10 acres. Local growers now market their own bulbs and flowers in the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area and some shipments to eastern areas of the United States.

Table 19.- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms and other Special Plants.
Kitsap County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; Vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields & under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	23	\$ 5,300	14	109,952	\$34,149
1944 ^{1/}	--	--	--	--	--
1949	14	16,696	16	53,650	65,691
1954	68	23,300	45	100,172	85,628

^{1/} No Census data are available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.